

UNCLASSIFIED

ANALYSIS

June 23, 1978

AR122

R

1. TRENDS IN HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA

Argentina's human rights record in 1978 displays some improvement over the 1976-77 period, but conditions have changed little in the last six months. Serious abuses still occur, despite reports of efforts by military officials to curb renegade counterterrorist activities. There is a reasonable prospect for gradual but significant improvement over the next year or so, however. In the meantime, the Argentines will probably pursue a damage-limiting strategy in their relations with the US.

*

*

*

*

In recent weeks, President Videla's government has taken several noteworthy steps that are designed primarily to defuse human rights criticism during the OAS General Assembly (June 21-30).

--On June 20, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission was invited to pay a "special visit" to investigate "legal-judicial conditions."

--President Videla is said to have informed an archbishop on June 19 that 14 labor leaders would be released and the cases of others reviewed.

--Alfredo Bravo, a well-known labor leader and rights activist, returned home on conditional liberty on June 16 after 10 months in jail.

--Two restrictions on press freedom were rescinded on June 5.

Implementation of well-timed human rights "concessions" has been a consistent Argentine tactic over the past two years.

The prospects for gradual improvement over the coming months will be enhanced by the continued diminution of the terrorist threat and the likelihood that Videla and his fellow moderates in the armed forces will consolidate their control over the security forces. On the latter point, according to

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade toDate ☐ Declassify on ☐ ReasonLot 81D208
Box 4963 (2/12)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

junior and non-commissioned officers have been detained for abuses during security operations, a number of others have been reassigned, and over 400 policemen have been disciplined in the last 18 months. We will be better able to assess the impact of these steps after termination of the artificial environment created by the World Cup soccer competition (June 1-25), during which the security apparatus has been treading very lightly.

Those favoring gradual human rights improvements will argue that such a policy serves Argentina's domestic and international interests.

--Domestically, it will remove human rights considerations as a divisive factor and an inhibition on the military's reconstruction plans.

--Internationally, it will restore Argentina's tarnished image, decrease the possibility of new political and economic sanctions, and open the way to improved relations with the US.

The Argentines are willing to abide strained relations with the US because they assign a higher priority to their counter-terrorist objectives. Videla will feel forced to react, however, when all US security assistance is terminated on September 30 (Kennedy-Humphrey amendment). Even so, he will probably try to assuage nationalistic sensitivities without unduly affronting the US. ([REDACTED] NOFORN)

UNCLASSIFIED